

THE  
REASONS  
FOR

*Non-conformity*

EXAMINED and REFUTED,

IN

ANSWER

To a Late

LETTER from a MINISTER

TO A

PERSON of QUALITY,

SHEWING

Some Reasons for his *Non-conformity*.

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LONDON,

Printed for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Bishop's Head*  
in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*, 1679.

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A N  
**A N S W E R**  
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**LETTER** from a **MINISTER**  
 T O A  
**P E R S O N** of **Q U A L I T Y**,  
*S H E W I N G*  
 Some *Reasons* for his Non-conformity.

**B** E I N G lately in a Bookseller's Shop with a design to gratifie my curiosity in perusing some of those many Pamphlets, which either a mistaken or factious zeal crowds into the World, I met with a Letter pretended to be writ from a *Minister* to a Person of Quality, shewing some *Reasons* of his Non-conformity. I have often observed this humour in some mean but vain people, who dare not look upon Persons of Quality, when they are present, to talk of them with great familiarity, as their peculiar Intimates and Confidants; an Art, whereby both Papists and Fanaricks think to conciliate great reverence to themselves.

However I was very glad to see this Pamphlet, which being a single sheet, was quickly read, and if it were thought requisite, as quickly answered, and indeed I expected either some new reasons of Non-conformity, or some new strength given to their old reasons; but upon a perusal of it soon discovered my mistake, and presently concluded, that such stuff as this could not be designed to satisfy a Person of Quality, but to impose upon the Injudicious Rabble, and that we must expect a new Letter of Reasons for Non-conformity every week or fortnight, like the *Domestick Intelligence*, or *Poor Robin*: a way, which has been found very effectual to corrupt the minds of weak and unstable People. For which reason (though my other occasions would sufficiently have pleaded my excuse) I resolved in great charity to undertake this Gentleman, either to satisfy him, if he be an honest and Impartial Inquirer, or to use as great diligence to undeceive People, as he does to deceive them.

To let pass his Introduction, which I confess I can neither make Grammar nor Sense of, he tells us, that "three grand Declarations are required to be made by all those who will conform: The First concerning the Book of Common-Prayer, the second concerning taking up Arms against the King, the third concerning the Solemn League and Covenant. Now with reference to all these (especially the first and last) I have had hitherto insuperable objections against the making any such Declaration.

I am heartily sorry, that any Men retain these Principles, and more that they dare to own them; and yet there were no great hurt in this, would but our Governours take the alarm, and consider what Indulgence is fit to be allowed those Men, who profess, that they have insuperable objections against declaring



ring Treason and Rebellion to be a sin, and that they dare not renounce that Covenant, which involved this Nation in a Bloody War, which pull'd down Church and State, and ended in the Barbarous Murder of the best of Kings: for those who believe they are still under the obligation of that Covenant, must necessarily believe, that they are still bound to act over the same Villanies, when they shall have power to do it. But of this more, when our Author shall think fit to give us his objections against the two last Declarations, at present we are only concerned to vindicate the First, the Declaration concerning the Book of Common Prayer.

And his great objection against this is a great mistake, or a disingenuous perverting the sense and meaning of the Declaration: The words are these. *I A. B. do declare my unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained and prescribed in and by the Book, entitled, The Book of Common-Prayer, &c.* Upon which words, he thus comments, *Surely words could not be devised by all the wit of man more comprehensive and more significant to testify our highest justification and commendation of every point and syllable, of every rite and ceremony, of every matter and thing contained in the whole Book, and in every page and line of it.* B. L.

This he descants on at large and greatly triumphs in the unreasonableness and absurdity of such a declaration; and I confess, I am perfectly of his mind, and would be a Non-conformist to any Church in the World, that should require such a declaration from me: but then those very Arguments, whereby he proves the unreasonableness of such a declaration, do abundantly convince me, that this is not the sense and meaning of the declaration: And every man must be of my mind, who will but think so charitably of

his Prince and Parliament and the Convocation, as not to believe them to be all mad.

For would any men in their wits, who deny the Infallibility of Pope and Councils, (as he well observes the Church of *England* does) require such an assent to any book of humane composition, as shall suppose it to be infallible: for so this declaration (according to that latitude of sense he bestows on it) supposes, that there is not the least possible mistake in the whole Book of Common-prayer, but that it is as infallible as the Bible, nay more infallible than any Copy of the Bible now extant in the World in any Language, in which there may be some possible mistakes through the fault of the Translators or Transcribers, as he observes, and as was before observed in the very Preface to the Common-Prayer-Book, that *in common equity there must be allowed a just and favourable construction to all humane Writings, especially such as are set forth by Authority, and even to the very best Translations of the Holy Scripture it self:* which is a plain Argument, that they never designed such a declaration of Assent to the Book of Common-Prayer, as excludes all possible mistakes, and gives us a general rule not to expound Acts of Parliament, or Publick Declarations, (which are *humane writings set forth by Authority*) to an absurd or impossible sense. In like manner Queen Elizabeth in her Injunctions brands those for *malicious Persons*, who put such *perverse constructions* on the Oaths of Allegiance, as could not by any equity of words, or good sense be thereof gathered.

And yet upon this mistake our Author proceeds to show the difference between old and new Conformity, and asserts, that ever since our happy reformation, the Ministers were not so strictly enjoined to declare their

*their unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained and prescribed in and by the Book; but it was only appointed to be read and used, and the Rites and Ceremonies of it duly to be observed: which he calls their moderation and piety, very good words, and indeed too good not to be qualified and recalled, and therefore adds, at least their prudence and policy: for he supposes, " that a great many hundreds, who conformed in those days, would not have conformed, " had any such declaration been required of them; " and upon this account doubts not to declare, that " present conformity is foreign and quite of another " nature from conformity heretofore; conscience being now much more forced and violated by them " in the Chair: which is said to vindicate themselves for dissenting so much from many ancient Puritans, who though they disliked many things, yet conformed and peaceably submitted to publick Constitutions.*

But this Person is either a great stranger to the Constitutions of the Church of *England* since the Reformation, or cannot but know, that if there were no such publick declaration, yet there were publick subscriptions required of the conforming Clergy, which is equivalent to a declaration; for he must be a man of a mighty squeamish conscience, who will not declare that which he can and does subscribe. For what he asserts, that there was no more required formerly of the Clergy, but barely to use and submit to the Common prayer and the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, is notoriously false. In the Articles published by the Authority of King *Edw. VI.* this is one, " The Book, which of late " time was given to the Church of *England* by the Kings *B. L.* " Authority and the Parliament, containing the manner " and form of praying and ministering the Sacraments in " the Church of *England*, likewise also the Book of ordering

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Sperry's  
Collection.



" ordering Ministers of the Church, set forth by the  
 " same Authority are godly, and in no point repug-  
 " nant to the wholesome Doctrine of the Gospel, but  
 " agreeable thereunto, furthering and beautifying the  
 " same not a little, and therefore of all faithful  
 " members of the Church of *England*, and chiefly  
 " of the Ministers of the Word, they ought to be re-  
 " ceived and allowed with all readiness of mind and  
 " thanksgiving, and to be commended to the People  
 " of God: which as you shall hear more presently  
 is not inferiour to an *unfeigned assent and consent*.

This Article indeed is left out of those, which  
 were set forth by the Authority of Queen *Elizabeth*,  
 but instead of it, the Clergy were required to sub-  
 scribe this promise or declaration. " I shall read the  
 " Service appointed, plainly, distinctly and audibly,  
 " that all the People may hear and understand.

B. L. Ad-  
 vertisements  
 by the  
*Queen.*

In the Reign and by the Authority of King *James*  
 were published the Constitutions and Canons Ecclesi-  
 astical, which are of force in the Church of *England*  
 to this day: and it is sufficiently known, that by  
 the 36 *Canon*, every Person to be ordained or promo-  
 ted to any Ecclesiastical Benefice, or Function, is re-  
 quired to subscribe the Three Articles, the second of  
 which concerns the Book of Common-prayer, and of  
 ordaining and consecrating Bishops, Priests and Dea-  
 cons, that it contains nothing in it contrary to the  
 Word of God, and may be lawfully used, and that he  
 himself will use that same form, and no other: from  
 whence it appears, that there was something more re-  
 quired of conforming Ministers in those days, than only  
 to read the Book of Common-prayer, and to observe the  
 Rites and Ceremonies of it, as this Author ignorantly  
 asserts, for they were also required by subscription to de-  
 clare



clare their approbation of it, as fit to be used, and their promise, that they would use it.

But still, they were not *so strictly enjoined to declare their unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained and prescribed in and by the Book.* Right, not in these very words, but to the same sense: for to own, that there is nothing in the Common prayer Book, which is contrary to the Word of God, and that it may be lawfully used, and that we will use it, is equivalent to an unfeigned assent, and consent. No says our Author, for *Assent with reference to the party assenting relates to his understanding; and with reference to the thing assented to, it relates to the truth and rightfulness of it:* So again, *Consent with reference to the party consenting, relates to his will; and with reference to the thing consented to, it relates to that goodness, expediency, behovefulness of it.*

A very wise and grave observation, as if I could not assent to the doing of what is to be done, as well as to the truth of a proposition, or could not assent to the lawfulness of a thing, without assenting to it as every way fittest and best and most expedient; as if I could not consent to submit to the use of what is lawful and legally imposed, without *chusing every thing mentioned and prescribed in the same Book, as most eligible and behoveful to be done, practised and observed*, as this Author is pleased to paraphrase an *unfeigned Consent*.

But to satisfy this Gentleman in the signification of these words *Assent* and *Consent*, it may be convenient to give him Qu. *Elizabeth's* interpretation of them, in the Preface to the Articles, *An. 1504.* "Whereupon  
"by diligent conference and communication, and at last  
"by *Assent* and *Consent* of the Persons before-laid, these  
"orders and rules ensuing have been thought meet and  
"convenient

Bishop  
Sparrow's  
Collection.

"convenient to be used and followed ; not yet pre-  
 "scribing these rules as laws equivalent with the  
 "eternal Word of God, and as of necessity to bind  
 "the consciences of her subjects in the nature of them  
 "considered in themselves ——— but as temporal  
 "orders meer Ecclesiastical, without any vain super-  
 "stition, and as rules in some part of Discipline  
 "concerning decency, distinction and order for the  
 "time. So that the Queen, and the Arch-bishop of  
 Canterbury, and the other Bishops in commission with  
 him, who drew up those Articles, thought we might  
 give our assent and consent to orders and rules ( and  
 by the same reason to a Book of Common-prayer ) as  
*only meet and convenient to be used and followed ;* and  
 that we may give such an *assent and consent* to tem-  
 porary rules, which are alterable at pleasure, and there-  
 fore not supposed to be every way perfect, or not to have  
 the least error or defect in them.

And in this sense the Act of Uniformity requires our  
 unfeigned assent and consent to the Book of Common-  
 prayer, &c. that is to the use of it, as is expressly  
 mentioned immediately before this declaration: that  
 every Minister shall *openly and publickly before the Congre-  
 gation declare his unfeigned assent and consent to the use  
 of all things in the said Book contained and prescribed, in  
 these words and no other. I A. B. do here declare, &c.*  
 Now when the Act it self limits the signification of  
 these words, Assent and Consent, only to the use, it  
 evidently betrays a perverse and malicious design,  
 to affix such a large signification on them, without  
 the least appearance of reason, as to render that de-  
 claration very absurd and impious, or at best very su-  
 spicious to honest men.

As for what he urges, that the Act it self expounds  
*consent by approve*, where it is said of a Lecturer, that

he

he shall give his assent to, and approbation of the said Book, and to the use of all the prayers, &c. I would fain know how it can be otherwise; for he, who assents and consents, must approve, as far as he assents and consents, but why cannot we approve of the use of a Book, or approve of a Book, as lawful to be used, as well as assent and consent to the use of it? so that what our Author seems so passionately to wish, *that they had required no more in conformity than use and submission*, is indeed all, that is required of the conforming Clergy, and is all, that is necessary to be required to attain the end of that Act, which was to establish uniformity in worship, *that there may be an universal agreement in the publick worship of Almighty God, and to the intent, that every person in this Realm may certainly know the rule to which he is to conform in Publick Worship*; which are the very words of the Act: but it has always been the practice of these men, to force another sense upon the words of Oaths and publick declarations, than was ever intended by our Governours, on purpose to justify their unjust clamours, and to countenance Schism and Faction.

Having thus in general justified the declaration of unfeigned assent and consent, it is time to consider his particular exceptions against the Book of Common-prayer: And his First exception is against reading *the Apocrypha as Lessons for the day*: but he ought to have said, for what day; for there is not one Lesson out of the *Apocrypha* appointed for any Sunday throughout the year; and is it not great impudence in these men to reproach the Church of *England* for appointing the *Apocrypha* to be read sometimes on the Week-days, who take no care themselves, that either the Holy Scriptures or *Apocrypha* should be read in their Conventicles all the week, nor scarce on Sundays; especially considering,

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that

See Mr.  
Falkner's  
*Libertas*  
*Eccles. c. 3.*



that there is always one Lesson out of the Canonical Scripture appointed to be read, besides the *Apocrypha*, and I suppose they will not assert it absolutely necessary every time we meet to worship God, to read two Chapters of the Holy Scriptures; for they themselves very seldom read one on their weekly Lectures, whatever they do on Sundays: we pay much greater reverence to the holy Scriptures than our Accusers do, as never meeting together for the worship of God without reading some portion of them; what is our fault then? not a neglect to read the Scriptures, but that sometimes we read some part of the *Apocrypha* together with the Scriptures; and if this be all, it is no other fault, than what the ancientest and purest Churches have been guilty of: as is well known to those, who are acquainted with the History of the Christian Church, and there are few Protestant Writers of any note, but have commended, or at least allowed the reading of them. But they are *fabulous Legends*, such as of *Tobit and his Dog*, *Bel and the Dragon*, *Judith and Baruch*: I suppose this Author does not know, that the 5 Ch. of *Tobit* is left out of our Kalendar, nor that many of the ancient Fathers did believe these to be true stories, though he is pleased confidently to call them fabulous Legends, I never saw any arguments yet to prove them Fables, but what would admit of a very fair solution, when this Author produces any, I shall consider them: But supposing them to be fables, that is parabolical discourses, they are never the less fit for that to be read in Christian Assemblies, since they may serve for instruction, or comfort, or reproof, as the Parables of our Saviour do.

*But they are read under the notion of Holy Scripture, for so in the whole lump together they are stiled in the order, no note of discrimination to make any distinction between*

See Falkners  
libertas Eccl.  
ch. 4. sect. 5.



*tween one and the other: and has this Author then the impudence to charge the Church of England with making no distinction between the Canonical Scripture and the Apocrypha? if not, is it not done like a very good Christian, sliely to insinuate so foul an imputation as this? if he does think the Church guilty, let him tell me the meaning of the sixth Article of Religion, wherein our Church declares, In the name of the Holy Scripture, we do understand those Canonical Books, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.*

B. L.

*“ And the other Books (as Hierome saith) the Church doth read for example of life and institution of manners, but yet doth not apply them to establish any doctrine. How is it possible for the best Church in the World to escape the envenomed Tongues and Pens of these Men, who do not blush to charge her with such doctrines, as are directly contrary to her own Articles? Had it not been more reasonable to assert, that the order takes no notice of the Apocryphal Lessons, than that it includes the Apocrypha in the common title of Holy Scriptures; which is the plain truth, for it only mentions the Lessons out of the old and new Testament, reckoning the Apocrypha, so well known, and so plainly discovered by the Kalendar, when it was once understood, that there was no need of particular directions about it.*

B. L.

*There is one objection more with reference to the Kalendar, that some Books of the Sacred Canon are wholly left out, and never to be read, some of them within a very little, some of them but half to be read, and many of them mutilated and curtailed as to several chapters contained in them. Now to show you of what force this objection is, let us first consider how much of the Holy Scripture is appointed to be read every Year by our Church: The Psalms of David are*

read over every Month, the most part of the old Testament once a Year, the new Testament excepting the *Revelations* thrice every Year, besides Epistles and Gospels: And have not these Men great reason to find fault with our Kalendar, who don't read the tenth part of the Bible once a Year in their Conventicles?

Secondly, the design of publick reading the Scriptures, is for publick instruction, and therefore the Church may very prudently leave out such parts of Scripture, as are dark and obscure, and not easily understood without an Expositor, or have not such an immediate influence upon the government of our lives, and reserve them to be read by Christians at home, or to be expounded to the People by publick Teachers: and such for the most part are those omissions, which this Author complains of; dark and obscure Prophecies or Genealogies, or such Histories, as are related in some other Books, which are appointed to be read.

And now Thirdly, I would desire this Gentleman to prove, that it is absolutely necessary to read the whole Scripture in our Churches; if it be, let our Dissenters first correct themselves, before they censure those, who are more just and innocent; if it be not, then it is no fault to omit some parts of Scripture, which are least fitted to the edification of a promiscuous multitude, while nothing is omitted, which is necessary to their instruction in Faith and manners: and when he shows any such omission, I will refuse to conform too.

To conclude this argument, it is well observed by a Learned man, that "the ancient Jews, who divided the old Testament into the Law, the Prophets, and the *Hagiographa*, did for a long time only read the Law in the Synagogues, after which only a Section of the  
"Prophets

“Prophets was added; but that the Hagiographa  
 “(which included all the Books from the beginning of  
 “the Chronicles to the end of the Canticles, besides  
 “*Ruth, Lamentations* and *Daniel*) were not read in the  
 “Synagogues, hath been observ’d from the *Talmudists*;  
 “and this is agreeable to divers passages of the new Te-  
 “stament, *Luk. 4. 16. Acts 13. 15, 27. Act. 15. 21.*  
 “yet Christ and his Apostles blamed not the Jews, but  
 “joyned with them in this Service. Such a vast diffe-  
 “rence is there between the temper of our Lord and his  
 “Apostles, and our Pharisaical Schismaricks.

His next objection is against the order appointed for the  
 “Ministration of Baptism; which is divided into three  
 “Branches.

First, that he does not approve of the strict requiring of  
 “God-fathers and God-mothers to stand as Sureties and  
 “Undertakers for the Child to be baptized, viz. that he shall  
 “renounce the Devil and all his works, and constantly be-  
 “lieve God’s holy Word, and obediently keep his Command-  
 “ments: His objection is against the strict requiring of  
 “this, and yet it is not so strictly required, as to make  
 “it essential to the nature of Baptism, as is evident in  
 “private Baptism, which is declared valid without it:  
 “but let us hear his Reasons against this.

First, that it is unscriptural: but it is not contrary to  
 “Scripture, and that is answer enough, till he can prove,  
 “that the Church has no power to appoint any Ceremo-  
 “nies or observances, but what are expressly warranted  
 “by Scripture, especially this being an ancient practice  
 “both in the Jewish and Christian Church; and as the  
 “Leyden Professors think (Persons whom I know our  
 “Author reverences) countenanced by Scripture also,  
 “*Isai. 18. 2, 3.* as has been before observed by Mr.  
 “Falkner.

His second objection against God-fathers, is, that  
 “the

*Synop. purr.  
 Theol. disp.  
 44. n. 54.*



*the Father of the Child is left out, if not wholly thrust out; a great fault this, but how does he prove it? because, he is not mentioned, nor taken notice of at all, in that public stipulation, as if he had no concern in it: a very wise argument! I borrow a Hundred Pounds, two of my Friends are bound for the payment of it, without taking any farther notice of me, than that the Money was lent to me, Ergo, I am discharged of this debt, because other Persons have given a Bond for it, and I have given none: The obligation of Parents to educate their Children is founded on the Laws of Nature and Religion, and acknowledged by all Mankind without an expresse stipulation; the obligation of God-fathers is voluntary, and therefore requires an expresse promise, and is designed as an additional security to the Church for the religious education of Children baptized.*

*His third objection is, that God-fathers do not keep this promise, but involve themselves in the guilt of lying and perjury: this I must acknowledge to be a great fault, and I fear too many are chargeable with it; but this is the fault of the Men, not of the Constitution: it is a demonstration of great prudence and piety in the Church, by all possible ways to secure the virtuous education of Children, who are baptized in their infancy, that the Church may not hereafter be scandalized with the ignorance and vices of such untaught and undisciplined Christians: the presumption of a religious education is necessary to give any Child a right to baptism, and therefore it is very commendable in the Church to take collateral security, where it may be had, as well as the direct security of Christian Parents: Did our Church exact any promise and engagement from God-fathers, which could not be kept, she might be charged with the guilt of their lying and perjury,*



perjury, as he calls it; but when the promise may easily be performed, and is nothing but what one Christian Friend ought to do for another, when occasion requires, without such a promise, - let every Man bear the guilt of his neglect, without reproaching the most prudent and wholesome Constitutions.

His second exception against the order of Baptism, is against the use of the sign of the Cross, but his objections against this are so very trifling, that they will give an answerer no great trouble: he knows not how to understand those words *in token*, when the Child is signed with the sign of the Cross, *in token that he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified*: why, what difficulty is there in understanding this word *token*, which is a plain English word, and familiarly understood by plain English-men? but if he wants a comment, he may take Bishop Morton's, that it is a declarative token of duty, which afterwards the Baptized person ought to perform, &c. but he believes the generality may mistake *in token*, for *in virtue and power of this sign*: but I believe, he suspects the generality to be more silly than they are, till their understandings are debauched with fanaticism, and I need not tell him, who may be thanked for that; but the way of these Men is to put scruples and whimsies into Peoples heads, and then to cry down the most innocent and sober usages, for fear of giving an occasion of misunderstanding to the vulgar and injudicious: but let them look to that, to remove the scruples they have made, or to bear the guilt of them.

The sum of his next objection is this: that Baptism itself obliges the person baptized to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and exhibits virtue and power to that purpose, and therefore those words *in token*, &c. should be more properly and immediately after Baptism, and not af-

Defence of  
three Cerem.

ter signing with the sign of the Cross, as if baptizing with water were not sufficient of it self, but more over the sign of the Cross needful to bind the Conscience and confer the blessing --- which is too too like a Sacrament upon a Sacrament: where we may observe the sliness of this Author, who would fain insinuate a charge, which he dares not own: This adding the sign of the Cross to Baptism is, as if baptizing with water were not sufficient of it self, and is too too like a Sacrament upon a Sacrament: Speak out man, is it so, or not? does the Church of England make the sign of the Cross essential to Baptism, and that Water-baptism is imperfect without it? here his courage fails him, as not daring to assert so known a falsehood: the Church of England having so expressly declared the contrary in the XXXVI. Canon, and in her Rubrick after the Office for private Baptism, where the Child privately baptized without the sign of the Cross, is declared to be lawfully and sufficiently baptized, and ought not to be baptized again: The sum then of his argument is this, that he dares not approve the sign of the Cross, because the use of it after Baptism may by a perverse interpretation seem to be what it is not, and what he dares not affirm it to be.

It is some comfort, that this Writer acknowledges in the next Paragraph, that the Primitive Christians did use the sign of the Cross, as indeed they did, both in administering Baptism, and upon divers other occasions, which one would think, might justify the Church of England in conforming to a Primitive practice; but what he adds, that they did it to distinguish themselves from the Pagans, who scorned the Cross, together with every sign and token of it; is never alledged as the reason of this practice by the ancient Christians, who did not use this sign to distinguish them-

themselves from *Jews* and *Pagans*, (though every peculiar usage, for what reason soever it be taken up, will necessarily prove a note of distinction) but to declare, that as much as a crucified Christ was scorned both by *Jews* and *Heathens*, they were not ashamed of the cross, but did put their whole trust and confidence in their crucified Lord, and were ready, when ever God pleased to call them to it, to be conformed to their suffering Head; and this is a perpetual reason for this use, while the Church has any enemies, and it is never like to be without, while there are either Atheists, or Fanaticks, or Papists. That the sign of the cross has been abused by Papists to idolatrous purposes, is no better argument against using the sign of the cross, than it is against owning the cross it self; for in using the sign of the cross, we only own the cross, that is, we profess to own a crucified Lord, and the Doctrine and Religion of the Cross. But this Person is much mistaken in the temper of the Church of *England*, which neither does any thing, nor leaves any thing undone, meerly for a note of distinction and separation; that is a piece of vanity and affectation which is peculiar to Pharisees, and some other People, who are very like them.

He has one objection more against the order of baptism, which refers to the Rubrick at the end of that Office: *Viz. It is certain by Gods word, that Children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved.* Now had I a mind to wave this dispute, I might tell him, that we do not give our assent and consent to this Rubrick, because though it be contained in, yet it is not prescribed by the Book of Common prayer, that is, it is never to be used, and we assent and consent only to the use of those things, which are both contained in and prescribed by that Book: but since this is evidently the doctrine of our Church as



appears both from the Homilies, and several passages in the Office of Baptism it self, I shall briefly consider his objections against it.

And first, he wishes *they had quoted the place*, where this is affirmed in Scripture; for he knows not where to find it; and I would desire him to tell me, whether nothing be undoubtedly certain by Scripture, but what we have an expresse Text for, if not, we must reject the Baptism of Infants too, which will put an end to the dispute concerning their salvation, when baptized.

If those who are regularly admitted into the Church of Christ, have a right to the blessings of the Covenant, then they have a title to salvation; if they have not, then Baptism is an insignificant ceremony, and not the Seal of a Covenant, which I suppose our Author will not easily affirm, no, not to oppose the Church of *England*. I say, those who are regularly admitted by baptism, for so our Church supposes, which answers most of his capricious and impertinent queries.

If the Children of very bad Parents be regularly admitted by baptism, or to speak plainer, may be lawfully baptized, as in some cases no doubt they may, we must acknowledge they receive the benefit of baptism too; but if any are baptized, who have no right to baptism, we are not bound to prove, that baptism shall be of any advantage to them: no more than that a Child shall inherit an Estate by vertue of an illegal or fraudulent conveyance.

Thus the supposition of a Christian King baptizing the Children of *Pagans, Turks, Jews*, by the same force by which he conquered their Parents, concerns more the legality of the Act, than the vertue of the Sacrament, for where ever the Sacrament is lawfully administered, it will have its due effect.



It is a very pretty objection against the vertue of baptism, that it supposes it to be *in the power of a man to make Infants sure and certain of salvation*; viz. by murdering of them, as soon as they are baptized, and accordingly, he teaches Whores a more charitable way of murdering their Infants, to baptize them first, that so their Souls may be saved, which is true Fanatick talk, and proves the objector to have more need of good Physick, than a serious answer; for let him put the case, as odly, as he pleases; Children that are lawfully baptized, are in Covenant with God, and have a good title to salvation, and those, who murder them send them to Heaven, as other Murderers do all the good men they kill. He asks just such another raving question; *May a Minister, since baptizing gives such an unquestionable title to Heaven, deny or suspend the ordinance to any Infant whatsoever, if he might be permitted to administer it?* if by permission, he means a legal permission, according to the terms and conditions of the Gospel, the answer is plain, that he ought not to deny it, that is, a Gospel Minister ought not to deny Baptism to any Infant, who has a just right to it; if he means any other permission than this, the Man is mad, and needs no other answer; for we don't suppose, that Baptism works like a spell or charm to whomsoever it be applied, but its vertue depends upon a Divine institution, and therefore requires persons duly qualified to receive it.

But he strangely aggravates the cruelty of those Ministers, who refuse to baptize Children, and consequently keep them under a suspicion of damnation, because their Parents scruple God-fathers and God-mothers, and the sign of the Cross, such an one, he says, deserves if possible to be unchristened himself again, and turned among Canibals, as one more deeply dipt, and baptized in

*their barbarous inhumanities; and adds, and yet if he be a true Son of the Church, and punctually observe his prescribed rule, he must not baptize any Infant without God fathers and God-mothers, without signing it with the sign of the Cross, whether it be saved or damned; ought not this Man of conscience, nay of a tender conscience, to have been very sure this charge had been just, before he had condemned the whole Clergy of the Church of England, to be turned among Canibals? and yet nothing can be more palpably false, for the Church of England has expressly ordered her Ministers, as is plain in the form of private Baptism, to baptize Children without God-fathers and God-mothers, or the sign of the cross, where there is any apparent danger of death, and therefore it must be the Parents fault, how scrupulous soever he be, not the Ministers, if his Child die unbaptized. I know not what remark to make on this, but shall leave it to himself, and every impartial Reader to think on it.*

But yet, I must farther observe, that to assert the salvation of baptized Infants, does not deny salvation to all that are unbaptized, though we are not so certain from the Word of God of the salvation of the one, as of the other: the salvation of baptized Infants depends on an express Covenant, but we have the goodness and clemency of the divine nature, as a reason to hope well of others, especially of the Children of Christian Parents, who were born within the Pale of the Church, and were designed by their Parents to be made the visible members of it.

Nor is the denial of Christian burial to such Infants as die unbaptized any argument, (as he suggests) that our Church doubts of their salvation, but only, that she does not own them as actual members of the Church, as no Persons are, who are not actually admitted into  
the

the Christian Church by Baptism: and possibly this may be designed as an act of Discipline to correct the neglect of Parents, and to beget in them a greater veneration for the Christian Sacraments.

His last objection is against the office for the burial of the Dead: in which we find these words, *forasmuch as it hath pleased God of his great mercy to take unto himself the Soul of our dear Brother here departed, &c.* where taking them to himself, he says, must signifie taking them into Heaven, if we believe the Lords Prayer, *Our Father, which art in Heaven*; but is God no where else then, but in Heaven, because he is there in an eminent manner? does not the wise man tell us, that the spirits of men departed, return unto God, who gave them, Eccl. 12. 7. Does that signifie going into heaven? then we have Scripture for it, that all men are saved, for the Spirits of all Men after death return to God.

To return to God, and to be taken to him, signifies to be put into the immediate disposal of God, which as a Learned man well observes, "Our Church acknowledges to be an act of mercy in God, through the grace of Christ, who hath the Keys of Hell and Death; that dying persons do not forthwith go in to the power of the Devil, who had the power of Death, Heb. 2. 14. but do immediately go into the hands of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ to be disposed of by him according to the promises and conditions of the Gospel-Covenant; agreeable to the sense of the ancient Church, which in the Offices of Buriall magnified the divine power, whereby the unjust and Tyrannous power of the Devil was overcome, and our Lord receiveth us, *ὁμοῖα τὰ ὁμοῖα δικάζονται καὶ κίματα*, to his peculiar and most righteous judgment.

Falkners  
libertas Eccl.  
ch. 5. f. 9.

But



But still he urges that other expression, that we commit his body to the ground, in a sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, which words (he tells us) must necessarily be spoken with reference to the person, then interred, inasmuch as they are the continuation of the foregoing declaration, viz. God's taking his soul to himself. Committing his Body to the ground, must indeed necessarily refer to the person interred, but there is no necessity every thing that follows should, for it is not *his*, but *the* Resurrection to life, we declare our hope of, our Church thinking it fit on such a sad occasion as this, to declare their hope of a future Resurrection; and since God's taking his Soul to himself, does not necessarily infer the salvation of such a person, as I have already shewed, we cannot thence infer that the Resurrection to life refers to the interred person neither.

But he has found one passage, which he says, puts it out of all doubt, (that when we bury a known Adulterer, Fornicator, Drunkard, we declare and avouch that his soul is assuredly gone to Heaven) viz. that in the prayer after burial, that when we shall depart this life we may rest in him, (viz. in Christ) as our hope is, this our Brother doth: this I grant refers to the interred person, but is no argument, that the former expressions do, for this is only a judgment of charity, which differs much from a sure and certain hope. There are various degrees of hope, and some of them so little, that we can hardly deny them to any person, though never so wicked; for where we are not absolutely sure, that they died wholly impenitent, we have some degree of hope, and though we have reason to fear this of too too many, yet we are seldom so certain of it, as to exclude all hopes of the contrary.

But

But as a fuller justification of our Church in this matter, we may consider, that this Office of Burial supposes, that the Person interred died in the Communion of the Church; and were Church censures duly administered, as this Office presumes them to be, and as certainly they would be, were not the Church weakened by powerful Schisms and Factions, no Man could die in the Communion of the Church, but such as we should have very good reason in the judgment of charity to hope well of; and since through the decay of Discipline, many die in the Communion of the Church, who deserved excommunication, I doubt not, but who ever shall leave out that sentence, *as our hope is, this our Brother doth*, at the Burial of some notorious profligate sinners, complies with the intention of the Church, and may justify himself to his Superiours for doing so.

Having thus examined, and, as I think, answered this Minister's objections against Conformity, I must now look back, and take notice of the only piece of ingenuity he has been guilty of throughout this Pamphlet; and that is, where he owns the lawful use of an *established Liturgy, or prescribed form of publick prayers*; nay, that as he says *nothing against a Liturgy, or prescribed form of publick prayers in the general, so neither against the main doctrine contained in the prayers of this Book of Common-prayers in particular*: and in requital of this, I shall as readily acknowledge what he adds, that *it is quite another thing to be bound up to declare my unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained in the Book, (but he ought also to have added, and prescribed by the Book) together with those prayers*: that is, that there is a real difference between that conformity, which is required of a Clergy-man, and that which is required of a Lay-

man:

man: but the use I would make of this acknowledgment is this, that according to this Minister's judgment, whatever objections there may be against conforming as a Minister, there are none, or such as he thinks not worth mentioning, against conforming as a private Christian, since both a form of prayer in general is lawful, and in particular those forms, which are prescribed in our Book of Common-prayers: the natural inference from which is, That nothing he has said in this Paper ought to dissuade private Christians from conforming to the Church of England by his own confession, which I hope all sober Christians will observe.

Having thus examined, and as I think, answered this Minister's objections against Conformity, I must now look back, and take notice of the only piece of ingenuity he has been guilty of throughout this Pamphlet: and that is, where he owns the lawfulness of an established Liturgy, or prescribed form of public prayer; nay, that as he says nothing against a Liturgy, or prescribed form of public prayer in the general, he mentions against the lawfulness of it in the particular of this Book of Common-prayers in particular: and in reply to this, I shall as readily acknowledge what he says, that it is quite another thing to be a lawfully established, and prescribed by the Book, (but he ought also to have added, and prescribed by the Book) together with these prayers: that is, that there is a real difference between that conformity which is required of a Clergy-man, and that which is required of a lay-

**THE END.**